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The anatomy of a novel:
Plot structure in Raintree County

by

Marian Gay Smith

A Thesis Submitted to the
Graduate Faculty in Partial Fulfillment of
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MASTER OF ARTS

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Signatures have been redacted for privacy

Iowa State University
Ames, Iowa

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I. INTRODUCTION

A. Publishing History of Raintree County; Reasons for Choice

Raintree County,¹ by Ross F. Lockridge, Jr., was published in 1948 with a great deal of fanfare. Six months before publication Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer bestowed upon it a Nobel Award of \$150,000 in a campaign to attract the best current fiction to the motion pictures. Later, the book was made a Book-of-the-Month Club selection, which brought another \$25,000 cash prize. A financial success for its author before a single copy was sold, Raintree County was high on the 1948 best-seller lists, with sales in excess of 400,000.

Despite the stigma inevitably associated with commercial and popular success, the book received widespread and mainly favorable critical attention. It was reviewed by a number of serious critics, as well as in the usual newspapers and magazines. Even the most hostile conceded the author's talent and promise. A number of them spoke of the book as a possible turning point in American literature. There was a general agreement that Lockridge would be an author of major importance.

On March 6, 1948, all of this bright promise was ended. For reasons never explained, if known, Ross Lockridge committed suicide in the Kaiser he had bought with some of his new wealth. John Leggett's recent book Ross and Tom² is an attempt to explain Lockridge's death and Thomas Heggen's (after the great successes of his novel Mr. Roberts and the play adapted from it). Leggett throws some fascinating light on the creation process of Raintree County, of which more later, and certainly

offers some plausible reasons for the suicide; but biography is outside the province of this investigation, which is confined to the plot structure of novel itself.

Lockridge is now consigned to the limbo reserved for one-book writers. Except for a single essay which appeared in 1956³ Raintree County has languished in critical and scholarly obscurity for the past twenty-seven years. Time magazine pronounced a requiem in its annual review of the year's new books, in December of 1948:

Nobody harpooned the . . . mythical white whale known as the "Great American Novel." Indiana's Ross Lockridge (who later committed suicide) made a stab at it; he brought home a huge, Ulysses-like animal named Raintree County, which was hailed by critics as a monumental attempt and then floated away in embarrassed silence.⁴

By 1953 sales had dropped to a few hundred. If the public still recalls the book at all, it must be assumed to be primarily because of the movie of the same title.

I have chosen this long-forgotten work as the subject of my thesis because of a feeling that it had an influence, unrecognized and unprovable, on American literature. Granted that the single book of an author who will not write another is not a very promising lode for scholarly mining, there are things about it which make it well worth another look. It is a truly amazing literary achievement, possessing genuine merit despite the frequent charges of prolixity and derivativeness. It was unquestionably the first "many-leveled" novel to gain wide popular success; that is, the first best-seller deliberately conceived to offer meaning in numerous layers, from a satisfying story line, to multiple-connotation

symbolism, to ancient myth, to an attempt to show the meaning of human life through its Everyman hero. Most certainly, it was not the first novel so conceived, but I believe it was the first to achieve real success with the average reader. And it is still fun to read--an exciting, absorbing, fast moving story. It does not seem stale or dated as compared, for example, to some of the beat novels of the 50s, partly because of its 19th Century setting, but more because of the beauty of its language and the timelessness of its theme (which I perceive to be the story of man on earth, as figured in the life of one man).

Much was written about the book when it came out, but there has never been any in-depth study of any aspect of this many-faceted novel. All of the reviews were general, even the two longer articles which appeared after Lockridge's death. They touched only lightly on such things as its symbolism, literary influences, complexity of plot, highly allegorical nature, and historical panorama. To investigate all of these things in detail would be far beyond the scope of this paper, which will be limited to a consideration of a single aspect of the book--its plot structure.

B. What the Critics Said

A quick survey of the reviews will give the tenor of critical reaction to Raintree County. There was a great deal of comment on the book's size and complexity. Many complained about the lack of discipline in the writing while acknowledging its force and beauty. These felt the book needed severe pruning. There was considerable mention of Wolfe, Whitman,

Faulkner, and Twain as obvious influences, and a great many comparisons to Joyce's Ulysses. Most agreed that the book was an attempt to write the Great American Novel. All agreed that it showed talent and promise.

Most of the reviews were more favorable than not, though all professed some reservations. The New York Times Book Review called it "an achievement of art and purpose, a cosmically brooding book full of significance and beauty."⁵ Orville Prescott, writing for The Yale Review, concluded that "the total effect is failure" but had praise for the "extraordinary talent" shown in the writing, and for the ambition of the undertaking.⁶ In its initial assessment (as opposed to the year-end summing up), Time devoted an entire page to the book as:

the impressive result of a bold, if not wholly successful, effort to write the Great American Novel . . . a studied work of art that is exciting enough to court comparison, in method at least, with the Ulysses of James Joyce. . . . Great talent has been expended to give this story solidity of detail and to raise it to the level of universal literature.

Harrison Smith, writing for The Saturday Review, gave it credit for having:

all of the stage-settings necessary for the Great American Novel . . . the ingenuity with which it was constructed, flashing backward and forward in time, was infuriating to many readers. It had everything in it, too much of everything; it lacked Wolfe's sense of rhythm . . . there was an implicit lack of creative balance, of grinding toil in its creation. It remains a novel that one instinctively calls great, an exhausting and wonderful effort toward something that could not be wholly realized.⁸

Howard Mumford Jones in the Saturday Review called it:

the best candidate for that mythical honor, the Great American Novel. . . . The book is full-blooded, it has gusto, ribaldry, vision, beauty, and narrative skill. It is also repetitious, overly "organized," reminiscent of a variety of predecessors,

"literary" in the wrong sense, and too dependent on source materials. But the breath of life sweeps through its voluminous pages; and it may be that Raintree County marks at last the end of a long slump in American fiction.⁹

Yet another reviewer, James Hilton, called it a "novel of rare stature for these days."¹⁰ These quotations indicate what most critics praised and damned about the book, but, more significantly, they suggest that this was a work of more than passing importance, whatever its defects.

Of the three basically unfavorable reviews, only one seems to be a balanced assessment--the one by Elizabeth Johnson for Commonweal. I will not quote at any length from her essay, because she comments on most of the same things as the others. The difference is that she gives more weight to what she finds wrong, less to what is good. Lockridge, she says, has talent and shows promise, but the book is summed up as "an amalgam of undigested Wolfe, murky Faulkner, and watery Whitman."¹¹

In an interview with Nanette Kutner, Lockridge singled out the two other hostile reviews, saying, "I don't think those fellows read the book through."¹² It would appear to be a justified complaint. The Newsweek writer comments that:

"Raintree County" is indeed a novel of "heroic proportions." It is also as loose at the joints as Paul Bunyan himself or a first draft by Thomas Wolfe. It spurts like a cut vein. It spreads everywhere, like beer slopped on a table.

If Lockridge had found an editor as capable as Wolfe had in Maxwell Perkins this might have been a really magnificent work. Obviously there was no such word craftsman about. The result is one gush of words that makes the reader wonder what kind of English it can have been that Lockridge taught for five years at Simmons College, Boston.¹³

Generally, the writer seems more interested in showing off his sophistication than in supporting his opinions.

Hamilton Basso in The New Yorker attacks the book in greater detail and displays several glaring inaccuracies, the most conspicuous of which is his consistent reference to the author as Ross Lockwood. (In Ross and Tom, Leggett suggests that this was deliberate--another way to insult Lockridge.) The book is said to contain "three love affairs that involve haystacks, a considerable amount of swimming in the nude, a girl who has a mole, a girl who has a scar, and a girl who seems to be completely unblemished." The book actually contains four love affairs, two brief nude swims, and no girl who is completely unblemished. The review is written with the kind of smart-aleck nastiness that makes one gloat when its author can be caught in an error.

Merely to get within the covers of the book is something of an accomplishment, like the feats performed by those sideshow performers who swallow nails, beer caps, open safety pins, and broken light bulbs. . . . To help the reader along, Mr. Lockwood uses one of his chronologies to chart the events of the day . . . another to list the flash-backs, and a third to deal with the historical events. . . . I don't see why the publishers of this book didn't go the limit and provide a compass.

Yet even Basso relents and has some final kind words to say.

And yet, unlikely as it may seem, Mr. Lockwood does have talent. When he stops trying to write like the author of a pageant of America and just goes ahead and writes, he can be read with interest and enjoyment.¹⁴

The two longest and most thoughtful appraisals of the book were written by William York Tindall in 1948, and by Joseph L. Blotner in 1956. The opening paragraph of Tindall's essay states:

The success of Raintree County by Ross Lockridge is doubly significant. It proves again that a substantial book may become a best seller. And it represents popular acceptance of the many-leveled novel, which, since the time of Dostoevski,

has attracted a small but increasing audience. It was the work of Virginia Woolf that marked the first approach toward popularity. But since the common reader, pleased by her surface, hardly ever left it for what lay below, her acceptance was not a popular triumph for many-leveled fiction.¹⁵

While it seems risky, at the very least, to assert that the common reader has ever found much to be pleased with in the works of Virginia Woolf, surface or otherwise, Mr. Tindall's idea that Raintree County marked the first entry of a complex, allegorical novel into the best-seller lists is a valid observation. Along with Mrs. Dalloway and To the Lighthouse, he discusses some levels of meaning in Philip Toynbee's Prothalamium, Hiram Haydn's The Time Is Noon, and Malcolm Lowry's Under the Volcano, none of which were popular successes at that time. He concludes with an appraisal of Raintree County, in which he shows a lively appreciation of its aims and techniques, comparing it with Ulysses and To the Lighthouse not altogether unfavorably, although he ranks the latter two higher. Summing up, he says:

I have heard readers complaining about the complexity of Raintree County; but, while they complained, they read. For Lockridge succeeded in narrowing, if not entirely closing, the space that has separated the general reader from the many-leveled novel. Adapting Joyce and Woolf, he served a wider audience without the loss of value that might be supposed.¹⁶

Some eight years later came Blotner's essay, "a reappraisal of what may well be one of the five or six most important novels of this era."¹⁷ Of the literary influences on the book--Joyce, Wolfe, Whitman, Twain--he says:

Lockridge learned from all of these writers, and, like most first novels, his book was sometimes imitative. But the

imitation was not slavish, not a substitute for original work. It was rather an attempt to use every literary technique he could to help achieve the extraordinarily difficult goal he had set for himself.¹⁸

Blotner devotes a good part of his attention to the book's use of myth and symbol, myth being for Lockridge the key to understanding both past and present (history is itself a kind of myth), with the characters and events of the book translatable as mythic symbols. He touches more briefly on the chronological plan and shows more recognition than any other critic of the way in which the time structure and transitional devices operate to reinforce the theme and content.

Lockridge invested Raintree County with multiple meanings, and he attempted to make them work on many levels: narrative and symbolic, personal and national, particular and universal.

Lockridge's writing sometimes achieves a high degree of technical virtuosity.

There is a highly effective use of contrast and the contrapuntal method.

Raintree County presents a panorama of American history, a chronicle of American literature, and a criticism of American society. . . . In addition to all its other attributes, it is a comic epic. . . . [It] is not the Great American Novel, which probably will never be written. But it is a substantial achievement which merits a place in American literature.¹⁹

It is significant that two serious critics, writing after Lockridge's death and after the furor of first, hasty appraisal, recognized this as an important and significant work. While most of the earlier reviews were favorable to the book, these two represent the most reasoned evaluations. One must feel that Lockridge's death was a great loss to American fiction.

C. Avenues of Exploration

Without exception, the reviews commented on the intricacy of the structural scheme of the book. Some objected on the grounds that it was artificial and irritating and made the story difficult to follow. Some praised it: "In a reality as complex as our own, method must adapt itself, and the reader who wants reality must adapt himself to some complexity of method."²⁰ None really explored the mechanisms and interrelationships of the massive plot structure. This paper undertakes to do so.

In electing to focus on the structure of such a large (1060 pages) and intricately designed work, one must accept the artificiality of isolating one part of an interwoven whole, pretending, as it were, that one can talk about the structure as a separate entity. It is, of course, impossible to discuss plot structure in a vacuum; other elements must be considered, to some degree, in order to understand how the frame of the narrative contributes to or detracts from the author's success in attaining his goal. To avoid becoming bogged down in plot synopses, it is necessary to assume that the reader has some familiarity with the book.

The basic plot concept can be described quite simply. The actual time span is a single day in the life of the poet-hero, John Wickliff Shawnessy, now fifty-three years old. The date is July 4, 1892, and there is a great celebration in the little town of Waycross to honor the homecoming of Senator Garwood B. Jones, boyhood friend of John and famous national politician with presidential ambitions. John, chief architect and planner of the celebration, moves through the events and

encounters of the day as they unfold in sixty-two narrative sections, mostly brief, beginning at dawn and ending at midnight. Interspersed with the current action are fifty-two flashbacks which tell the story of John Shawnessy's life, played out against the backdrop of the period's great historical events, beginning in 1844 and carrying to the present, July 4, 1892.

Tindall calls the action of July 4, 1892, the outer plot and the flashbacks the inner plot, presumably because the former is "really" happening, while the latter takes place only in the memory of John Shawnessy. The terms are descriptive in this sense but misleading in another, for to designate the day's action as the outer plot is to ignore the fact that most of it consists of highly inward musing by the hero. For this reason I prefer to use the more neutral terms then and now, shortened to T and N for convenience, to designate the flashbacks and the frame day.

The appendix shows all of the N and T segments in order of their occurrence in the book, with beginning and ending page numbers. The book offers a table of the flashbacks in chronological order and a summary of the day's events, but neither chart shows the structure of the book itself nor reveals anything about the individual N segments and how they alternate with the Ts. The appendix gives an easily studied view of the skeleton of the novel.

Looking at the appendix, certain things are readily apparent--how the chapters fall into groups according to the dominant character or time in the hero's life; which segments are not in a regular time sequence; where

two Ns occur together; where the central point of view shifts; how the pace of the N-T alternation changes; the pagination, number of pages, and classification by length of each chapter. The column labeled FOCUS shows that the Ts come in clusters centering around a particular era or character in the life of the hero, for the most part in chronological order. We also see that Johnny's relationship with Esther is out of chronological order, and that those sections which deal with Eva are in three separate places. Because there are sixty-two Ns and only fifty-two Ts, it is obvious that at some points the succession of segments must be N-N rather than N-T. The table shows exactly where these N-N junctures occur, and it also provides a possible clue as to why there are more Ns than Ts, when we see that each of these N-Ns involves some kind of change in central point of view. By noting the page numbers, we can learn something about the tempo of the book--the speeding up and slowing down of the alternating time shifts. A little arithmetic tells us that the T chapters cover 754 pages as against 306 pages of Ns. If we delete the long N35, which is a special case and will receive separate consideration, we find that the average number of pages for the Ns is 4.3 compared to 14.5 for the Ts. This shows that the bulk of the novel is devoted to the hero's past life, tied together with brief excursions into the present time of the book.

The table, then, offers a ready overview of many things about the book that are not easily accessible in any other way. It also makes references to various parts of the book less cumbersome. For example, "T27" tells the reader that I am referring to the flashback that runs from

pages 496-511, that it deals with the years 1861-1863, and that Susanna is central in John's life at this time, with the Civil War also of importance. "N46*" refers to pages 753-754 and is told from Eva's central viewpoint. The table will be more helpful if left folded out.

In On Aggression,²¹ his work about animal behavior, Konrad Lorenz says that to study any animal's physical structure, the student of evolution must ask, "What is it for?" The table, by giving a complete look at the book's structure, allows us to ask just this question about it. What is the structure for? How does it serve the book? Why did Lockridge choose this particular narrative scheme rather than a more straightforward and simple one? To find the answers, we must try to find the answers to other questions: How do the transitions work, and what do these devices do for the book? Within any given part of the book telling about a particular period in the life of the hero, what relationship can we find between the N and T segments? Why does the Esther group occur out of chronological order? Why, in the Esther and Eva series, does the central point of view shift from the hero to Esther or Eva? At the book's ending, can we find a reason, or reasons, for the order in which the final part of each era of John's life is revealed? Obviously, to arrive at any answers, it will be necessary to consider to some extent the content and meaning of the book.

The next three chapters will deal with the techniques by which transitions between segments are effected; the ways in which the Ts and Ns interrelate, especially within a particular narrative cluster; and special problems in the Esther and Eva series, the long segment N35, and the order of denouements. The final chapter will relate the symbolism and allegorical aspects of the book to its structure.

II. GETTING THERE: CHAPTER TRANSITIONS

Although Ross and Tom is in no sense a critical biography, it contains some facts about the development of Raintree County that are relevant to this paper. Lockridge first conceived the novel in 1936.

For central figures he chose his mother and her two brothers, Ernest and Frank. He would open with their childhood in the rural Indiana of 1895 with its one-room schools and Fourth-of-July celebrations and bring them to maturity in the industrialized present of the 1930s. It would be a big novel about the great change that had taken place in American life in the twentieth century.²²

In the summer of 1938 he wrote several chapters of the projected work, was dissatisfied with them, and put them aside to take up the writing of a long epic poem called The Dream of the Flesh of Iron. This ambitious work was to be "essentially a condemnation of modern society," but it grew in reach until "on its grandest level The Dream's stage had become the universe; its time was eternity and its story that of evolution."

Technique fascinated him. When he and Vernice saw the Cinema Club's screening of D. W. Griffith's Intolerance, Ross recognized immediate parallels to The Dream of the Flesh of Iron. His master plan was of a multistoried structure and he was busy, as Griffith was, on several levels simultaneously. He seized on the director's use of transitional dissolves, deciding it was just the device to get him from his subconscious world into the realistic one where he hoped to unfold his social theme.²³

In early 1941 The Dream was rejected by Houghton Mifflin. Lockridge shelved the manuscript and decided to write a novel that would sell.

He prescribed for himself a course in contemporary fiction which would clarify for him the nature of "the American theme," and be a warm-up for the popular novel he felt sure he could produce.²⁴

The writers he studied particularly at this time were Wolfe, with whom

he felt he shared the gift of pouring out words, although he found much of Wolfe's work undisciplined--just as the critics were to find his own; Thomas Mann, especially The Magic Mountain for its "portrait of the disintegrating and warring European culture"; and above all James Joyce's Ulysses with its overall plan of a single synoptic day which he "felt he could borrow without being imitative, in fact could use it for breaking new fictional ground."

For his new superstructure he modified the Joycean single day to a series of days "existing like palimpsests on older days." In moving thus backward in time he could salvage the devices he had discovered in Intolerance and, more recently, in Orson Welles's Citizen Kane. In the "imbedded flashback" and the "poetic dissolve from Day to Flashback," he saw his way to using some of the dream techniques of The Dream of the Flesh of Iron and to blend actual history with the fictional experience of his characters²⁵

At this time Lockridge was nominally working toward a Ph.D. at Harvard; his dissertation subject was to be Walt Whitman. Two other writers he reread at this time, seeking ideas, were Plato (the Republic) and Freud on dreams. He set to work, rearranging his life to give him the maximum time for writing.

More than two years later he suddenly realized what was wrong with the massive manuscript: He was too far forward in time, he needed to move back half a century, his grandfather should be the model for the central character, and he should return to the single synoptic day.

He chose the "Glorious Fourth of July, 1892." The holiday provided patriotic feeling and pageantry while the year, that of the national election, gave him a chance for political speculation.

From that day he would retrace, through a sequence of flashbacks, his now-mature hero's lifetime to reveal its true nature, as well as that of the spiritual and political history of the republic.²⁶

The basic device used to effect the time shifts is cinematic (remember, Lockridge adapted the idea from Griffin's Intolerance) and is closest to what is called (in The Television Program: Its Direction and Production) the matched dissolve:

As the picture from one camera is being faded out, the picture from the next is being faded in, so that what we get is a blend, one picture melting into the next. When the two pictures are similar in composition, as in the case of a close-up of one character which is dissolving into an identical pose held by another, we get what is known as a matched dissolve.²⁷

Lockridge adapted this device by ending every segment of Raintree County in midsentence and beginning the next one with a word or words which would logically continue the truncated ending sentence but which also constitute the beginning of a completely new sentence. In addition, each T segment begins with an upright pyramid of capitalized words and ends with an inverted one. Thus N17-T14 looks something like this:

The Year of Jubilee is come! Let it be known all over the Republic. Let it be told by trumpets and by proclamations and by

A
LETTER AT THE POST OFFICE
WAS ALWAYS A BIG EVENT IN RAINTREE COUNTY,

and on being advised that there was one there for him, Johnny had lost no time getting into Freehaven.

Or, to illustrate the return from past to present, T13-N17:

And he was beginning to recall with more envy than guilt a pollendropping tree beside the lake, and a companion who had waited for him there as if to teach him

AN INGENIOUS AND FORBIDDEN GAME AND THEN RETURN
TO THE ALIEN EARTH FROM WHICH SHE
HAD

---COME, Mr. Shawnessy said. The Great Man will soon be here.

To Howard Mumford Jones it was "an ingenious mechanical device . . . Jointure of history and fiction is, I think, more smoothly made here than in the case of John Dos Passos."²⁸ Clearly, with more than one hundred transitions to be made, smoothness is of great value, and the dual-purpose words at beginning and end provide just that. In addition, the slight jolt of having to readjust to the context of another sentence helps to set the reader's mind for the change in time. These effects are reinforced by the special typography. The pyramids of capital letters cause a slight but inescapable slowing of both eye and mind, so there is a hovering which not only makes the transition easy without backtracking but also carries the sense forward into the new sentence without strain. On this rather mechanical level, then, the value of the overlapping sentence is readily apparent. Lockridge had to find a means of achieving the rapid and constant shifts in time smoothly, with the least possible burden for the reader and with an economy of words. The technique he adopted does the job well, on all counts.

It is more, however, than just a bridge from one chapter to the next, important as this function is. On a deeper level it adds to the comic vision which pervades Raintree County. There are three ways in which the matched dissolve technique heightens the humor that surfaces and dives like a rainbow colored tropical fish through the lights and shadows of the novel. The first has to do with the nature of humor itself. Henri Bergson has observed that laughter arises from some kind of incongruity which startles or surprises. This effect is inherent in the joining sentences that start out with one sense and syntax and change in

midstream to a completely new sense and syntax for the same words. Even where neither the beginning nor ending of the transition sentence has any humorous content, the very incongruity between start and finish contains the seeds of laughter.

The second kind of comic reinforcement is somewhat more subtle and difficult to describe. It has to do with the frequent use of Epic Fragments from imaginary (Cosmic Enquirer, Mythic Examiner) or supposedly real (Free Enquirer, Clarion) newspapers. These fragments, employing the florid journalese of the 19th century--in itself now humorous--are a contrapuntal accompaniment for many of the book's climactic events. The effect may be ironic: The Great Footrace between Johnny and Flash Perkins is described in a heroic, Olympian tone offset by newspaper accounts of a Great Steamboat Race, a Great Locomotive Race, and the Sullivan-Corbett boxing match. It may be ribald: When Johnny and Susanna taste the forbidden fruit under the mythical Raintree, Johnny's beautiful and lyric visions of himself as a young pagan god are hilariously studded with accounts of a balloon ascension (suspenseful inflation and takeoff) and a "great and daring feat" of tightrope walking (much ado about the tight-rope walker's long, smoothly planed pole). Or it may be gently nostalgic: Johnny's Graduation Day at Peedee Academy is narrated in a dry, Twainian style, but the newspaper fragments are evocatively sentimental. Whatever the type of humorous contrast achieved by these journalistic insertions, they are usually introduced by the same matched dissolve technique used in the chapter transitions--and they are almost always comic in their effect. Thus, the comic use of the device within the chapters

carries, like an echo, the implication of humor when the device is used between chapters.

Last, the joining sentences themselves are often deliberately humorous in their changes of tone and/or subject. For example, in the T18-N22 transition, when Johnny and Susanna visit her home on their wedding trip, he is enchanted with the South; but he finds there are sweet, sad memories he cannot forget:

---no, he couldn't have forgotten them though he had steeped himself

IN THIS DARKBLOODED AND DELICIOUS LAND
NOT ONCE,
BUT

---SEVEN TIMES, the Senator said. Laugh if you will, gentlemen, but back in those days I was a brute of a boy.

We are not told just what happened seven times, but the possibilities are obvious and entertaining.

To sum up, then, the technique which Lockridge devised to take the reader back and forth in time without losing the sense of the story operates on more than one level. It is an essential tool for advancing the narrative flow, bridging the time shifts efficiently. It enters into the comic spirit of the book through the surprise and incongruity of the of the two ends of the joining sentence, sharing the same words for different meanings; through the use of this same device to introduce the newspaper fragments that lend laughter to some of the most intensely felt episodes; and through the deliberate construction of many of these sentences to produce a humorous contrast between the beginning and ending parts. It must be conceded that there are some points in the book

where the device seems strained or obtrusive, as is probably inevitable when the same technique is repeated so many times. On the whole, however, this adaptation of the matched dissolve serves the book superlatively well.

III. TIME PAST, TIME PRESENT

As noted earlier, Raintree County has a twofold plot. One strand is the events of the frame day, the present time of the book--July 4, 1892. The other tells in flashbacks the story of the hero's life from 1844 to the present. The two narratives alternate, beginning almost fifty years apart and merging finally at the end of the day. This chapter undertakes to explore the ways in which the frame day and flashbacks relate to and interact with each other.

Since the book contains one hundred and fourteen distinct segments, it would clearly be neither feasible nor profitable to examine them individually. The FOCUS column in the appendix shows that the Ts (flashbacks) fall into groups which center around a particular character or period in John Shawnessy's life. These groups are numbered in their order of chronological occurrence: (1) the early years, (2) Nell, (3) Susanna, (4) the war years, (5) Laura and the city, (6) Esther, and (7) Eva. The story of Susanna (3) is told in two separate clusters, and the last group gives the ending of each story. The table gives a complete breakdown of the chapters--plot strand (T or N), focus of T segments, dates of flashbacks, pagination and number of pages, and length category for each chapter--as they occur in the novel. The narrative generally advances chronologically except for the Eva and Esther chapters, which are out of order and will be considered separately in a later chapter. Analyzing the Ts in clusters, together with the related Ns, would seem to offer a manageable and meaningful approach to this aspect of

the plot structure.

It is extremely difficult to talk about such a long and complicated work in a way which gives a fair representation of the whole, yet is clear to the reader. I have been able to resolve this difficulty only by ruthless elimination of much that is good and interesting and important; by great care in choosing what will be included in the discussion; by a certain amount of inevitable oversimplification; and by the assumption that the reader knows the book fairly well. In the interest of clarity, I have chosen the first two narrative clusters to illustrate the interaction of the past/present strands. Confined as this plan is, the analysis will be far from exhaustive; the selected details are intended primarily to illustrate the major ways in which Lockridge has interwoven past and present to illuminate, enhance, and contain each other.

Raintree County is an epic. Like the great epics of classical mythology, it is the story, told in poetic language, of a hero and his quest--to discover the secret of life. In pursuit of his quest the hero has many adventures; he dreams, learns, loves, suffers, and strives. His goal is always out of reach, yet he is triumphant. "Make way, make way for the Hero of Raintree County! His victory is not in consummations but in quests!" (1059). The story closes like the Odyssey with the hero, no longer young, safe at home with his wife and family, as in Tennyson's "Ulysses":

Though much is taken, much abides; and though
We are not now that strength which in old days
Moved earth and heaven, that which we are, we are;
One equal temper of heroic hearts,
Made weak by time and fate, but strong in will
To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield.

John Shawnessy's mystical quest is symbolized by his writing of a long poem, an unfinished work intended to capture in words the secret of life.

Because of Lockridge's fascination with cinematic techniques, it seems appropriate to note that Raintree County may also be defined as an epic in terms of the motion picture. The book Understanding Movies offers this definition:

Epic. A film genre characterized by bold and sweeping themes, usually in heroic proportions. The protagonist is generally an ideal representative of a culture--either national, religious, or regional. The tone of most epics is dignified and the treatment, larger than life.²⁹

Certainly there is no lack of bold and sweeping themes--the big panorama of American history, the portrayal of the hero as a kind of Everyman, his quest for the secret of life. John Shawnessy is clearly meant to embody the spirit of America. And in tone and treatment the book fits the definition, although its humor would be an unlikely component of an epic film.

In brief summary, John Wickliff Shawnessy's life and quest begin and end in Raintree County, a mythical place in central Indiana. His first love is Nell Gaither, but he sins with and marries a stranger from the South, Susanna Drake. The marriage ends with Susanna's madness and his son's death by fire. John enlists in the Grand Army of the Republic, renews his love affair with Nell, and fights for the North until he is seriously wounded and reported killed in action. He returns home to find that Nell, thinking him dead, has married his old rival Garwood B. Jones and died in childbirth. For the next eleven years he teaches school, runs unsuccessfully (but in the best Johnny Shawnessy tradition) for public office, and works on his own epic--the long, grandly conceived poem which

symbolizes his quest. Unfinished manuscript in hand, he goes to New York, where he has an inconclusive affair with an actress named Laura Golden. A year later he is called home by the death of his mother; New York remains unconquered. Back in Raintree County for good, he woos and wins Esther Root against the violent opposition of her father (also in the best Johnny Shawnessy tradition). The story closes with John and Esther living in Waycross with their three children, both parents teaching school. John is still working on his epic, apparently content with his ongoing, never ending quest--still searching for the secret of life.

As every one knows, the simplest way to tell a story is to start at the beginning and proceed in a straight time line to the end. But Lockridge chose to complicate things by starting at the end and telling John Shawnessy's life story as a series of flashbacks "imbedded" within the action of the book's final day. The flashback is not, nowadays, an unusual way to tell a story. Raintree County, however, has many more narrative segments and shifts between present and past than are common. In choosing such a complicated time frame, the author risks losing the unity that is essential to any work of art, and assumes the difficult task not only of preserving this unity within each strand of the plot--past and present--but also of interweaving the two strands into a unified whole. It follows that the choice of a risky and difficult method over a safer and easier way of telling the story must be based on the author's belief that the book will gain enough in depth of meaning, reality, intensity, or whatever, to justify the choice. I do not propose here to pass judgment on Lockridge's success in his use of the method, but to examine and

describe at close range some of the ways in which he uses it to make past and present interact.

The beginning of our epic--the early years--runs from page 1 through page 89 and is divided into nine sections, N1-N5 and T1-T4. The mature hero of the Ns is Mr. Shawnessy; the small child and youth of the Ts is Johnny. A quick look at the segments will suggest at once some obvious relationships and parallels between the Ns and the Ts. N1 is an Epic Fragment from the Semicentennial Edition of the Freehaven Free Enquirer looking back on fifty years of history and announcing the Fourth-of-July celebration which will take place in Waycross on that day. In N2 Mr. Shawnessy has a dream from which he awakens at dawn. He sets forth in N3 with his family from Waycross on a quick round trip to Freehaven, where he has some errands preliminary to the main events of the day. At the end of N4 they have traveled five of the seven miles to Freehaven, and it is not quite six o'clock. And N5 finds them well past the Old Home Place with about a mile to go.

Between the Ns and connected with them by the cinematic matched dissolve are the flashbacks T1-T4, covering the years 1844 to 1854. Johnny, as a small boy, watches westbound families pass in front of his house. (One family makes an enforced stop while his father delivers their first child.) He listens to arguments about politics, especially slavery. He encounters the Methodist religion and, learning to read, enters the world of literature. He dreams of going West and of writing a great book. And he goes with his family to Freehaven on July 4, 1854, where he sees

Nell Gaither, hears patriotic oratory and medicine-show spiels, and buys a book about phrenology.

The first and most obvious parallel between these past and present episodes is the dawning of a day as a metaphor for the beginning of a life. Also the setting forth on a journey parallels life's early years. Both the 1854 and the 1892 Fourth-of-July celebrations involve a journey to Freehaven, almost forty years apart in time. Here again is the suggestion of beginnings--the birth of a nation on Independence Day, the long ago birth of a child to the westering family, and the birth of the hero Johnny. There is the retrospective view of fifty years' history in N1's Epic Fragment, contrasted with the young hero's westward-yearning view of that same history in the making. All of these connections are readily apparent in summary, but in the book itself they are felt as subtle and delicate hints.

One of the major themes of Raintree County is that life and time are cyclical, endlessly recurring yet always new. The alternation of past and present reinforces this theme in a number of ways that operate almost on a subconscious level as one reads the book. For one thing, the parallels named in the foregoing paragraph are never exact; each is incomplete or imperfect in some way, suggesting the paired (and paradoxical) ideas of constant repetition, constant change. Other possibilities:

Mr. Shawnessy talks with his sons--Will, seven, and Wesley, thirteen--and these conversations echo Johnny's talks with his father during the years when he was five to fifteen. Again, the parallel, though inexact, carrying with it the idea of child-as-father-to-the-man or of rebirth

in one's children. These ideas are subtly present in N3 when we meet Mr. Shawnessy's carefree inner twin, mr. shawnessy (the eternal child), who "carried on his eternal vagabondage through a vast reserve of memories and dreams" and whose "birth was recorded, if anywhere, in the first chapter of Genesis, and [whose] death was foreseen only in Revelation" (18). And in T1 Johnny thinks he can remember an earlier life:

He had some dim intuitions and memories of it, all drenched in green and gold. Nameless, and neither child nor man, he had lived in a beautiful garden where stately trees dripped flowers on the ground. And somehow that life was longer than all the rest of his life . . . (15)

Mr. Shawnessy's dream before dawn, familiar landmarks he passes on the road to Freehaven, his mental encounter with mr. shawnessy, conversation with his sons--all awaken in the mature hero memories of the past.

Johnny's child-view of the westward migration and the great slavery debate, his delight in books, his puppy love for Nell, his emergence from childhood--all kindle in the young hero dreams of the future. Mr.

Shawnessy looks back across the years to Johnny; Johnny yearns ahead in time toward Mr. Shawnessy. These two (or are they one?) kinds of inward thoughts intersect and interweave, to form a continuous thread of remembrance and longing, touching past and present at many points, spinning them into a continuum best compared to a spiral--always circling back upon itself, almost but never quite repeating itself.

Raintree County is an epic, a poetic story of a hero and his quest for the secret of life, a hero who dreams, learns, loves, suffers, and strives, whose "victories are not in consummations but in quests." In this light we will consider still other ways in which past and present

interact. Outwardly, not much happens in the first section of the book; the action is mainly inward. The child-hero dreams and learns; the aging hero dreams and remembers. They are mythic dreams and clearly so intended. Consider Mr. Shawnessy's early morning dream, in which he encounters a naked lady reclining sphinxlike on a stone slab, in the Waycross post office. She seems about to offer him a kiss but instead hands him a newspaper:

a parchment warm to the touch, engraved with a map of Raintree County so exquisitely made that the principal landmarks showed in relief with living colors. . . . It was all warm and glowing with the secret he had sought for half a century. The words inscribed on the deep paper were dawnwords, each one disclosing the origin and essence of the thing named. But as he sought to read them, they dissolved into the substance of the map (5).

In the dream the lady floats away, and he prepares to leave the post office, holding "a branch of maize loaded with one ripe ear" (7).

Half a century earlier Johnny reads avidly in Greek mythology, in which it seems "he had perhaps recovered the lost prehistoric summer of his own life" (58), and he has a recurring childhood dream like a foreshadowing of Mr. Shawnessy's dawn dream:

He must have been a child, though he possessed a vigor and desire more than a child's. . . . For a long time, he had possessed a golden bough and had meant to keep it for a token, all heavy with seed and fruit. He could not even remember the face of one whom he had known there in that tranquil summer. He had even forgotten all the names . . . (61)

The similarities between the man's dream and the boy's are striking but not exact--the bough loaded with seed, the lovely stranger, and above all the elusive secret of the names. Johnny turns to books for the answers, but:

as he read and didn't find the answer to the secret, he made a resolution that he would someday write the book that would unlock the riddle of the earth of Raintree County, of his mother and father, and himself. Thus when he was very young, only about seven years old, he decided upon his life work (57).

Johnny finds his quest, and Mr. Shawnessy dreams of unlocking "the secret he had sought for half a century."

All of the themes of the hero's life are foreshadowed throughout the first cluster of frame day episodes and flashbacks. The sphinx-like lady of Mr. Shawnessy's dream is like a reincarnation of Nell. Like Nell, she has green eyes and golden hair; she speaks his name in the same tantalizing, softly personal way; she is naked, as Johnny later sees Nell in the river; and she floats away on the dream-river as Nell is lost to Johnny in the river of time. After Johnny sees the champion runner of the County, he daydreams of winning the Fourth-of-July race himself and becoming the Hero of the County--which he later does. When the young hero sees violent arguments and fist fights over slavery, the Civil War is casting its shadow before it; Johnny reads Uncle Tom's Cabin and is convinced that slavery must be ended, and that he will help end it--which he later does. Throughout the book the Fourth of July is a significant symbol of beginnings, of history, of America, and of a timeless Republic. In the first part of the book two Fourths--the frame day of 1892 and the boyhood holiday of 1854--evoke various other celebrations in the intervening years, in a blend of foreshadowing and recollection. In the early hours of July 4, 1892, the middle-aged Mr. Shawnessy reminisces about that long ago Fourth of July as though it still awaits him somewhere in time:

Listen, it was all a dream, I know, of the Great War and of growing older and of all the faces of the children. . . . I must hurry down the road to the County Seat.

.
And I shall hear words spoken in the Square, thin syllables of vanished summers, I shall hear the words before the words became Events, before the Events became History. I didn't know it then, but the words were really the seeds of battles and of marches, the words were also love that is a shy flower opening beside remembered waters, the words were also dead men lying in the rain, bloated bodies between the cornrows in the beautiful July earth of America (63-64).

Many other passages in this opening section hint at things to come and are echoed later so that the reader actually comes to feel that he is remembering with the hero, an involvement that adds much to the sense of a simultaneous existence of past and present. In these initial chapters Lockridge has laid a solid foundation for the towering and complex structure of his book.

The second cluster of segments (N6-N12, T5-T11) centers around the young hero's first love, Nell Gaither. The appendix shows that the Ts in this group are much longer than their related Ns. Here is yet another way of manipulating the time shifts to achieve a desired effect. The high ratio of flashback to frame day pages has the result that Johnny's first love assumes for the reader a much greater importance than the simple total of pages in the section would indicate. Johnny's romance with Nell overshadows all of his other loves, even though she is not a central figure again until the last flashback. In fact, while typing the manuscript for her husband, Vernice Lockridge "came very close to mutiny at her keyboard, at his [Johnny's] interest in one female character."³⁰

Nell's importance is also emphasized by the intensity with which

Lockridge evokes the beauty and anguish of erotic awakening, steeped in the sunlight of golden summer, threaded with the curving green waters of the Shawmucky River. At the start of the section in N6 Mr. Shawnessy shows the children the site of his old hometown, Danwebster. All that is left now is the graveyard, past which "the lazy highway of the river beckoned, luring down banks and shoals of memory" (91). As he remembers how he had a vision of beauty by the river in a long ago summer, we move (via a matched dissolve) into T5 which is a lyric evocation of that summer, where the young hero works in lush fields and comes to the river to dream. Johnny has found Shakespeare, and he believes that he too will be a great poet.

During that first summer of his great desire to be a poet, he wrote hundreds of verses that seemed to him no less good than Shakespeare's. In the summer of his body's maturity, he had become expressive like a god, and like a god, he would ravish beauty by the mere wishing. . . . Achieving all at once a man's full vigor of body and mind, Johnny Shawnessy lived in a continual torment of desire--desire to know, to possess, to make (100).

The river holds him in its spell. He thinks perhaps it holds the secret he is seeking, and tries to follow it down to Paradise Lake, but blunders into the Great Swamp on the way, where he is overwhelmed by its teeming life:

The creatures of the river swarmed, shrieked, swam, coupled, seeded, bloomed, died, stank around him. He appeared to be in the very source of life, a womblike center. River and shore were one; leaf and flesh, blossom and genitalia, seed and egg, were one cruel impulse (103).

All of these images of the river and desire find their focus when Johnny sees Nell swimming naked, and he falls in love. She, however, continues

to be squired by Garwood B. Jones, a large and florid young man who is Johnny's rival in journalism (each writes a newspaper column that summer) and politics (Garwood later defeats Johnny in running for office), as well as in love. The young hero dreams out the summer in the enchantment of Nell and the river.

Those days, through all his waking it ran, rank with curious
fleshes, to the lake. It had given him beauty and desire.
Some day, he must find again forbidden whiteness in the river
and become the joyous fisherman, the proud possessor of the
river's most curved and radiant flesh (114-15).

Garwood Jones, through his alternating appearances in frame day and flashback episodes, is an example of how a character acts as a link between past and present. As the story moves on, the numbers of such links increase. The plot thickens as more and more characters, events, and memories enter the hero's life. The narrative becomes increasingly rich and dense, and the two streams of past and present are every more intermingled in their flow toward the book's ending, where they meet and merge.

A more specific look at the role of Garwood B. Jones will offer some insight into this particular function of the structure. His first appearance in the book is in N4 as a mature, fully developed character--the U. S. Senator whose homecoming to Waycross is the main event of the Fourth-of-July program. He has written Mr. Shawnessy asking him to obtain the fabled "profane" copy of the Raintree County Atlas (supposedly showing the natives engaged in various naughty activities) from the Historical Museum where it has been jealously guarded for years by one Waldo May, recently deceased. In the letter Jones reveals himself as

the complete politician--ambitious (he has Presidential aspirations), corrupt to a degree, unctuously pious in public, but displaying in private about both the world at large and his own machinations a wry, cynical amusement that redeems him for the reader.

The following flashback, T4, describes Johnny's first encounter with Garwood, the young Jones clearly foreshadowing the man he is to be. It is the Fourth of July, 1854, and Garwood is Nell's escort.

He had a broad, smooth face, dark, wavy hair fragrant with oil, and blue eyes filled with faint amusement. He thrust out his hand and said in an incredibly big voice,

---Happy to make your acquaintance, John.

The greeting was both personal and patronizing.

...
---Garwood is speaking on the program today, Johnny,
Nell said.

---Just a few patriotic recitations, the boy said with arrogant humility.

Johnny didn't dislike Garwood Jones, but he envied the smooth, newly razored face, the deep voice, the long trousers, and the place on the Program of the Day (66).

He moves in and out of the hero's early life, part rival, part friend, acquiring added dimensions with each meeting. These flashback appearances alternate with the frame day conversations between the two men, so that the reader comes to feel that he knows the man and remembers the boy just as Mr. Shawnessy does. This development of character through past and present encounters gives a depth of reality and involvement that I believe is a definite function of the dual plot structure--another answer to the question "What is it for?"

The river and Garwood Jones are important devices for connecting the flashbacks with the frame day in this part of the book, but there are many others, some like faint hints or echoes, some more explicit. In N9,

for example, Mr. Shawnessy picks up some prints of pictures taken thirty-three years earlier--Johnny, Nell, and Susanna Drake, his first wife. In T8 he meets Susanna at the photographer's on the day the pictures were taken and challenges the County champion to a footrace, recalling his dream of one day becoming the Hero of the County himself. At the end of N10 Mr. Shawnessy stops at the graveyard by the site of Danwebster, and his thoughts begin the matched dissolve transition to T9:

He saw the stones grayly protruding from the grass and weeds, some nodding to the ground, and on their tranquil forms frail lines of

LEGENDS
IN A CLASS-DAY ALBUM
IN MEMORY OF HAPPY DAYS TOGETHER

at the Pedee Academy marked the close of Johnny Shawnessy's schooling in Raintree County (185-86).

T9, graduation day, 1859, is a capsule evocation of an era. There are the keepsake books and the sentimental notes inscribed therein. There is an Epic Fragment from the Free Enquirer in marvelously ornate language, describing the commencement exercises. And there are the romantic hero and heroine--Johnny and Nell--exchanging pictures with poetic declarations of love written on the back. Then, a matched dissolve to N11, in which Mr. Shawnessy is still musing in the graveyard:

I will remember long gold hair around a face that was like no other. I will remember boats that moved in gala procession far down between widening shores. And oars that made languid wounds in the pale flesh of the river (198).

As he muses on the past, Mr. Shawnessy's memories again fade into a matched dissolve to the day of the class picnic (T10), when Johnny manages to outwit Garwood and get Nell to himself. They set out on the river,

lagging behind the others, and Johnny grounds the boat on a sandbar. In a delirium of sun and love they wade ashore, romp amorously through a meadow, and return to the river where they undress and enter the water. Johnny's love-dream of the river goddess seems about to become reality, but the idyll is interrupted; a few days later, repenting her midsummer madness, Nell sends him a note asking him never to speak to her again. In the matched dissolve which ends the Nell chapters, the note's signature--the single word NELL--is the heading for N13, which begins the Susanna series. Mr. Shawnessy, still in the graveyard, stands "retracing with his finger a carven name" (232), and we understand that the name is carved on her tombstone. Thus, early in the book we learn that Nell has died, but we do not learn how and when until almost the end. The intense reader interest and suspense generated by this technique add further to Nell's importance in the story--another way that Lockridge uses the past-present time frame to achieve a desired effect.

Earlier, I said that within the book's framework the past and present contain each other. Obviously, memory is a way of holding the past in the present, and it is through the recollections of the hero that his entire life is recreated within the span of a single day. But there is more to it than simple remembrance of days gone by; as we share the thoughts of Mr. Shawnessy in the present, it becomes clear that the young Hero of Raintree County lives. The years (although they sit lightly) have inevitably altered the outward man, but within the aging shell the timeless Hero, "whose birth was recorded, if anywhere, in the first chapter of Genesis, and whose death was foreseen only in Revelation" (18), remains

as the unchanging center, clustered over but not obscured by the accretions of his years.

In the flashbacks the future is contained in the past. Mr. Shawnessy is a determinist who believes that free choice is a part of the universal network of causality.

---Human beings, Mr. Shawnessy said, don't know how powerful they are. Every person determines the future by his least act. The Law of Causality means that the life of any man is the sum of everything past and the germ of everything to come (944).

This philosophy is reflected in the flashbacks--the foreshadowings, the repeated statement that every time, every action contains within itself the seeds of the future, complete and unalterable.

For Johnny Shawnessy, too, it was only a question of time. Time had become again a real duration that had a seed in the past and a flower in the future. In the Court House Square, he had had his being sown with small black words, and they had become a promise he could neither alter nor diminish.

Always and for all men, he knew, time had been bringing dark events to birth (290).

The sense of inevitability is reinforced as one reads the flashbacks, by the fact that much of what is going to happen is already known from things revealed in the frame day episodes. This simultaneous view of past and future blurs the lines of demarcation between flashback and frame day, so that each is a part of the other, an effect which could hardly be achieved with a straight-line narrative. Another way in which the frame day is worked into the flashbacks is that Johnny's dreams and longings constantly look to the future--to some degree, he lives in the future. In reverse, there are occasional moments in the flashbacks when

Mr. Shawnessy seems to have taken over the central point of view from Johnny, with a comment clearly out of tune with the young hero's innocence and idealism. For instance, when Johnny at fifteen is watching Flash Perkins prepare for a race, someone points out Flash's girl and adds that Flash probably "gets her regular;" this is followed by the remark that "in those days there was always someone in the crowd who took a cynical view of things" (85). Another example of this change in tone is when Johnny at nineteen is being devoured with guilt and remorse for having swum naked with Nell and having had carnal knowledge of Susanna shortly thereafter; a note of detached amusement is sounded amidst the anguish: "Apparently he had a fatal talent for picking out girls who liked to take off their clothes by lonely waters" (259). Mr. Shawnessy surfaces in Johnny, as though the young hero were somehow remembering ahead. These momentary shifts in viewpoint from the young hero to the middle-aged man help further to integrate the past with the future.

The length of this chapter, despite my best efforts to keep it as brief as possible, demonstrates the great variety and number of ways in which the two strands of the plot interact. The basic question of the chapter is whether the book is well enough served by the use of this complicated and difficult narrative technique, to justify its adoption in place of a more simple and straightforward method. I selected the first two chapter groups in the book to use in the investigation of this question.

In the first group, an examination of the Ns as related to the Ts

reveals numerous parallels between past and present that echo back and forth across the years, suggesting the themes both of recurrence and renewal in time. The idea of beginnings is seen in the metaphors of dawn and infancy, of the actual setting forth on a journey and the opening of a life's journey, of the birth of a child and the start of a nation (the Fourth of July holidays of 1854 and 1892). Major themes of the book are foreshadowed in dreams, waking and sleeping, and in many other ways. The child hero begins his quest for the secret of life; the mature hero is still at work on his unfinished epic.

In the second chapter group, centering around Nell, Lockridge establishes her importance in the book by manipulating the relative lengths of the N and T chapters, and by increasing the intensity of the flashback narrative. The river is a central, recurring symbol, rich in connotation. Garwood Jones, as a developing character in the past and a mature character in the frame day, is an example of how characters can link the two time strands of the plot and deepen reader involvement. Past and present appear to coexist through the intricate and subtle uses of remembrance of things past and dreams of the future.

I have tried to illustrate, then, through an analysis of these two sections of the book, some of the many ways in which the two strands of the plot interact to enhance, illuminate, contain, and flow into each other. The devices used by the author to achieve this continuous interplay of the two time lines are so varied and so rich in implications of the simultaneous existence of past and present, that it is impossible to do more than examine a relatively small number in the hope that those selected adequately demonstrate this vital aspect of the functioning of the plot structure.

IV. SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS

A. Esther and Eva

The chapter groups centering around Esther and Eva differ from the rest in two ways. They are out of chronological order, and the central point of view shifts from the hero to his wife or daughter. The first part of this chapter will investigate some possible reasons for the differences.

The change in viewpoint is, I think, easily and simply explained. Of the characters who are important to John Shawnessy at different times in his life, only these two are involved in his present life. Nell and Susanna are dead, and Laura is married to Cash Carney. Eva and Esther, on the other hand, are very much in the present. This in itself does not mandate that they be allowed to speak for themselves, but it does make the change reasonable. Also, Esther's main conflict lies in her inner struggle to choose between what she sees as her duty to her father and her love for Mr. Shawnessy; it is the heart of her story and can be revealed adequately only if told from her point of view. Telling the story through the eyes of the hero would mean mostly missing the point, as his only conflict is the direct confrontation with Esther's father, Gideon Root. Moreover, Esther's problem has never been completely resolved and continues through her part of the frame day episodes.

There is an even stronger reason for making Eva's the central viewpoint. It is hard to tell effectively a story in which a child is the

main character except through the eyes of the child. An adult's viewpoint would miss the significance of small events that are meaningful to the child. In fact, seen outwardly, the life of the average child offers little from which to fashion an interesting narrative. The story benefits from the inward view. Additionally, Eva seems in some respects to reflect Johnny as a child. She has the same engrossing love of books, the same determination to become a famous writer, and the same desire to excel physically. The parallel is strengthened by revealing her thoughts and dreams, which Mr. Shawnessy could only infer.

However, explaining why the central point of view shifts from the hero to Eva and Esther does not answer the question of how the change serves the overall structure of the plot. Granted that the content of these sections dictates the change, there is still the question of what the Eva and Esther series do for the book as a whole. The change in viewpoint risks confusion and further complication in an already complex structure, so we must consider whether the risk is justified. Since it appears that the Eva and Esther stories can best be told from their point of view, the question is whether they should be included at all. Do they strengthen or weaken the structure of the book?

With Eva's chapters this is a very large question indeed. Their placement suggests that they may be intended to provide a note of optimism--the child as a symbol of life's continuity. The appendix shows that the first Eva section comes at the close of the Nell group, just after we learn that Nell is dead. Eva's appearance may be meant to relieve the pathos of this discovery. The same possibility applies to the

second Eva group, which comes after the war years and before the sad eleven-year period when Johnny seems to be in a kind of limbo. Or it may be that Eva suggests enduring innocence and childhood, coming as she does before the Susanna group, in which Johnny loses his innocence, and later at the point where Johnny leaves youth behind and enters fully into maturity. The problem is that even though one accepts these rather tenuous notions about the significance of Eva's out-of-chronology placement in the book, Eva herself does not fill us with thoughts of hope nor call up visions of the deathless joy and innocence of childhood. Eva--let's face it--is not a very attractive child, physically or spiritually. Her baby pictures show "a fat, bald, bug-eyed thing that looked something like a toad in a dress" (238). She feels it is her duty to become beautiful because of the beautiful names her father has given her, but at twelve she is "still squatty and plump with large staring blue eyes and peculiar brown hair" (239). Her adoration of her father borders on obsession, and there is more than a faint suggestion that she sees her mother (with whom she has scant rapport) as her rival. She has a tantrum when she can no longer beat her brother Wesley in wrestling. She works with frantic competitiveness to equal Wesley in school, never quite succeeding. She is often willful and naughty, for which she is switched by her mother. Her desire is to be first in her father's eyes, her ambition to write a book glorifying her father's life. Altogether, Eva is not particularly appealing, much as the reader may sympathize with her early adolescent miseries.

There is, therefore, some justification for including the Eva

episodes, but in my opinion the book loses far more than it gains. There is no question that the material is irrelevant to the overall design, and the change in point of view interrupts the story without offsetting benefits. In addition, Lockridge introduces some obscure symbolism involving a doll of her brother's which Eva "murdered," and a dream in which she sees her father's severed head being worried by dogs. The editors at Houghton Mifflin wanted the sections cut, but Lockridge, after some modifications;

retained them, arguing they were essential in showing John Shawnessy not as a questing hero but as "father-preserver, the progenitor of Raintree County as a way of life." Also, he thought the separate point of view an asset, preventing artistic monotony; he did not mention that Elsie [the original name] was his mother in childhood portrait, and for that reason he wanted her to stand.³¹

One wonders whether his mother enjoyed this doubtful tribute! Altogether, I must agree with the editors that the book would have been better without Eva.

The Esther chapters, on the other hand, are not only essential to the narrative (their omission would leave a gaping hole in the story) but also are handled with great skill. The appendix shows that the Esther group (6) interrupts the Susanna series (3). This suggests that Esther is intended to serve in some way as a parallel for Susanna, and they are indeed tied together by a common theme, the Old Testament myth of the Temptation and the Fall. Each story is an ingenious variation on the myth, and each is very different in emphasis and approach, although both women clearly play the role of Eve. Susanna is Eve as temptress, Esther as disobedient daughter.

A summary of the two will help show how the two women represent these two aspects of Eve. Susanna meets Johnny while she is visiting from the South, and seduces him after he wins the Fourth-of-July foot-race. Stricken with guilt, he asks her to marry him even though she confesses that she is not pregnant. He and Susanna are married and depart for a long honeymoon in the South. They enjoy the luxury offered by her wealthy friends and relatives, a luxury which Johnny is increasingly aware is based on the evil of slavery. They return to Freehaven, where the first clear symptoms of Susanna's insanity begin, worsening through her pregnancy and the birth of their child. Gradually, the outlines of her past emerge, a tangle of madness, miscegenation, and love. Her father openly kept a beautiful mulatto mistress. According to Susanna, who adored them both, she was a great lady and theirs was a great love. Susanna's mother, whom she hated and feared, suffered from increasingly violent periods of insanity. The little girl set in motion the final act of the tragedy when she left a note in her mother's room saying that her father loved Henrietta, the mistress. On that same night the mother apparently murdered the two lovers and set fire to the house, dying in the fire from which Susanna was barely rescued. She is left with a scar on her breast symbolizing the inward scars of guilt and horror that eventually drive her to the madness she fears as her mother's legacy. Pushing her in the same direction is her belief that she is probably Henrietta's daughter and so, part Negro. She sinks deeper and deeper into paranoia, and, pathetically trying to protect her son and husband from her imaginary enemies, runs off with the little boy. After a

nightmarish pursuit, Johnny returns home to find the house in flames. The child dies in the fire and Susanna, badly disfigured and hopelessly insane, must be permanently committed.

The myth of the Fall is symbolized in several ways. Most directly, Susanna represents Eve as the temptress in her seduction of Johnny, which takes place at the significantly named Lake Paradise and which is the end of Eden for Johnny. He gives up Nell and accepts the burden of his guilt. The Susanna flashbacks are told against a background of the impending Civil War, which Lockridge uses as an analogue for the Fall. The first group is interspersed with Epic Fragments about John Brown; during the second group the war actually begins. Since Susanna is both slave owner and possibly part Negro herself, she embodies the major problems of the South. Reinforcing the symbolism, the frame day episodes consist mainly of conversations about the Republic and the Civil War in terms of the period of innocence before and guilt and betrayal after; the war itself is seen as a reenactment of the Fall.

Esther is not Eve as temptress but Eve as disobedient daughter. Her father is a stern, bearded patriarch whom she confuses with God in her early years--a jealous father who favors her with a possessive love having strongly incestuous overtones. Any slight disobedience leaves Esther with a sense of guilt that carries a conviction of mortal sin for which she must pay heavily. Yet her love for Mr. Shawnessy is also an enduring fact of her life, dating from the time he was her teacher. When they meet again as adults (at the same Lake Paradise) he asks her to marry him as soon as he can solve the legal problem of his first marriage. She

agrees, even believing "that she had sinned a sin so blissful that the penalty must be proportionately severe" (416). In the months that follow she sees him on the sly, but with mounting guilt. The feelings in the County run high in sympathy for the lovers, and Mr. Root is threatened with violence on several occasions. Finally, feeling that it is all her fault, Esther agrees to go West with Pa. We do not learn until near the end of the book that at the very moment of departure, torn almost to madness by what she sees as the conflict between love and duty, she runs from the house to her lover, deserting Pa. She has fulfilled her role as Eve choosing to disobey her Father.

The frame day chapters imbedded in Esther's allegorical reenactment of the Fall portray a tent meeting. The text of the sermon is the Old Testament myth itself, preached with powerful and sensual imagery by one Rev. Lloyd G. Jarvey, a "primitive" shouting revivalist. After the sermon Esther encounters her father, and we see that the conflict has never really ended. He still wants her to come home, and she still fears that he is somehow a threat to her marriage and to Mr. Shawnessy.

The series centering on Susanna and Esther, then, are closely related in a number of ways, all tied to the Old Testament story of the Fall. Susanna's seduction of Johnny, her personification of the tormented South, and the conflagration of the Civil War all symbolize the myth. Enclosed within the framework of Susanna's history, Esther reenacts Eve's rebellion against her father, and at the heart of it all is the Rev. Jarvey preaching his sermon right out of the Old Testament itself. The interweaving of the two chapter groups, with their diverse

symbolism, into two sustained and powerful narratives which reinforce each other in so many ways, is one of Lockridge's finest uses of the technique he devised for his book.

B. N35: A Celebration

N35 is the longest single segment in Raintree County--forty-two pages. The appendix shows that only four of the frame day chapters are ten pages or more, and a large majority are four pages or less. In size alone this chapter merits special attention, but it has other peculiarities. The central point of view is author omniscient and is not limited to a single character, as in the rest of the book. The action shifts rapidly from scene to scene, from character to character. John Shawnessy is only one of the cast, which includes a great white bull, Mrs. Evalina Brown, the Perfessor, Senator Garwood B. Jones, the Rev. Lloyd G. Jarvey, the Widow Passiffee, and various minor characters. The time is from 11:15 to 12:30, a bridge from morning to afternoon, the top of the day. In the book's chronology of the day's events it is described thus:

A photographer, a preacher, a lady in a Victorian mansion, a chorus of men only, and A WHITE BULL prepare respectively to take pictures, glorify God, distribute pamphlets, see an Exhibition for Men only, and affirm life (viii).

In the white glare of noon, the mood is erotic and pagan. The bull waits in his pasture, bellowing with frustrated desire. The Rev. Jarvey paces his small tent in a generalized rage of lust; he believes that Mrs. Brown and Mr. Shawnessy are lovers and he plots with Gideon Root to have Shawnessy run out of town. Goaded by thoughts of catching them in

flagrante delicto, he sets out to make one last attempt to save Mrs. Brown, whose beauty he feels should be placed on the altar of God (with whom he feels a strong sense of identity). He is about to enter her home when he is distracted and driven off by the loud noises of bull and spectators next door. The bull and a pretty brown heifer (described to suggest Zeus and Europa) entertain a select group of local citizens. Mrs. Brown, who has been diverted from her intended chore of passing out pamphlets on woman's suffrage, watches from the tower of her mansion; the spectators below, catching sight of her, indulge in lustful speculation about the lovely and mysterious widow. As the party moves off to march in the G. A. R. Parade, to be followed by lunch, the Perfessor (throughout the book a kind of inverted alter ego for the hero) sums up the erotic, masculine mood of the chapter:

---Fine, the Perfessor said. I have the devil's own appetite. I've seen a cow climbed, and now I want to fill my belly. Thus in a single day I shall have participated in the three main pastimes of man, fluting, feeding, and

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is the name of the goddam thing, the General said (594-95).

Again, the placement of the chapter provides a clue to its purpose in the book. N35 comes almost at dead center of the book; the time is the middle of the day; and it occurs at the point in the flashbacks when the hero is changing from boy to man, between the tragic ending of Susanna's story and the war years. Obviously, it is to serve as a bridge between two major parts of Shawnessy's life, youth and maturity. N35 foreshadows the themes of the following section--the male-dominated world

of war, the urgent sex of the soldier, and the peculiar exhilaration of wartime. In the first part of the book the sphinx-lady of Mr. Shawnessy's dream recalls the ancient riddle of man: "What creature is it that in the morning of its life . . ." (8), a recurring theme of the book. Here, it is noon, when man abandons the four-legged infant posture of the riddle to go on two legs as a mature man. Hence, the entire episode can be seen as a portion of the riddle, as well as a symbolic acting out of some pagan initiation into manhood. Still another theme of the book which is emphasized here is the conflict between the rather strict public mores of Raintree County and the primal urges of man, at most thinly veneered. In this chapter the morality of the County, heretofore shown as dominant, momentarily gives way to more ancient imperatives--another foreshadowing of the dominant mood of wartime.

In Ross and Tom all of the editors--at Houghton Mifflin, MGM, and Book-of-the-Month Club--expressed reservations about what I assume to be this part of the book. Apparently, Lockridge did do some cutting and revising, although it is not clear in what manner or just how much. Nor is it clear whether everyone's doubts were completely satisfied by the changes he made. It is my opinion that N35 serves the book well but in a different way from the other chapters. This long chapter relates to the rest of the book in various ways, of course, but it seems designed to stand out as a separate part rather than to be interwoven as the others are. In its length, in its differences of tone and viewpoint, it is like a long bridge which affords a view of the surrounding countryside. As we pass over it, there is a pause in the flow of the narrative.

We have time, as it were, to see where we have been and get an idea about where we are going. The chapter restates some of the major themes of the book, with a change in emphasis that clearly signals a major transition. As the action moves directly into the Grand Patriotic Program which serves, appropriately, as the frame day background for the war years, the reader has been well prepared to enter a new era in the life of the hero.

C. Endings

The final section of Raintree County consists of nine flashbacks (T44-T52) in which the endings of the earlier flashback series are revealed, and eleven frame day episodes dealing with evening events and conversation as the day draws to its close. The pace of the book becomes more measured; the appendix shows that the Ns in this section are nearly all of medium length or long, while the Ts are mostly medium or short, a marked difference from any other chapter group. The present assumes a quality of valediction and summing up as Mr. Shawnessy and the Perfessor argue their personal philosophies. The two plot strands are moving toward their final joining in the person of the Hero of Raintree County.

Earlier in the book, each group of chapters ends with an unresolved situation, leaving the reader in suspense about what happened. Now, we begin to find out. Lockridge skillfully maintains the suspense even here, by dividing the denouements of Esther's and Susanna's stories into two installments, and by deferring Nell's to the very last flashback.

It is Nell in whom the reader has the greatest interest; each flashback, in fact, seems designed to increase the reader's eagerness to find out why Johnny loses his first and tenderest love. By manipulating the order of the endings, Lockridge maintains the intensity of the narrative so that it does not really slow down, even though the past-present alternation is less rapid.

Raintree County is an epic. It is the story, told in poetic language, of a hero and his quest for the secret of life. In pursuit of his quest, the hero has many adventures--he dreams, learns, loves, suffers, and strives. Here in the final section of the book are the high points of his epic--the climaxes of his life. In the flashbacks, Esther makes her painful decision to leave the hero and go West with her father, and we leave her on the eve of her departure. On the Fourth of July, 1859, Johnny wins the Great Footrace and becomes the Hero of Raintree County in a glorious moment of triumph; drunk with victory, he reaches a kind of summit here--no other triumph will ever be so perfect. The next flashback is the Fall--the seduction of Johnny by Susanna at Lake Paradise, where the hero loses his innocence and his youthful Eden. In the next, he returns from his pursuit of his tragic, mad wife Susanna to find his home in flames and his small son dead. In the longest of the flashbacks, T48, he hovers near death in a military hospital, recovers, goes to the theatre and sees Lincoln assassinated, and returns home to a town that has believed him dead for six months. In T50 he wins Esther, who flees to him from her father in the very hour of their departure for the West. In T51 three-year-old Eva, like her father before her, finds the Raintree.

And finally Johnny, the returning hero, back from the dead, goes to look at his own grave--and finds Nell's. Believing the report of Johnny's death, she has married Garwood and died in childbirth.

In this section of the book the past increasingly becomes a part of the present. It is in a frame day segment that we learn of Susanna's death by drowning, a possible suicide. In another, Gideon Root is climactically defeated in his old struggle to reclaim his daughter, when a mob he has incited to tar and feather Mr. Shawnessy loses its momentum and disperses. John and the Perfessor reminisce about the war and politics and women; they speak of myth and history, of matter and spirit, of arrivals and departures, of life and death, and of homecoming. Their talk is a distillation of the hero's learning, hard-won in his search for the secret of life, and a statement of his continuing quest. He does not live in the past; the past lives in him.

Saying that the past, in this last part of the book, becomes increasingly incorporated into the frame day episodes would seem to suggest that the past here becomes relatively more emphasized in the plot structure. In fact, the opposite is true. Throughout the book the flashbacks have been, for the most part, much more important than the frame day, both in length and intensity. In the final section of the book, as the length of the frame day chapters nears equality with that of the flashbacks, the present assumes an increasing importance in the plot structure; and this shift in emphasis helps to clarify the reasons for the ordering of the flashbacks. For here, more than anywhere else in the novel, the past dances to the tune of the present. The flashbacks grow out of and are

dictated by the leisurely dialogue between Mr. Shawnessy and the Professor. In addition, as each denouement is completed, the reader's curiosity is satisfied and the intensity diminishes for this strand of the plot. With each flashback the reader can say of some part of the hero's life, "So that's what happend." As the book draws to its close, the two timestreams of the plot structure draw nearer to each other in length and intensity, and finally come together in time.

V. SYMBOL AND ALLEGORY

It is not the intent of this paper to deal with Raintree County's symbolism and allegory per se, but to consider them only as they relate to the plot structure. Because these aspects, especially the allegorical, are so closely tied to the central theme of the book, perhaps the place to begin is Lockridge's goal in writing the book, in order to see how the symbol and allegory, within the structural design, reveal and serve his purpose.

Most of the critics appeared to take it for granted that Raintree County was an attempt at the Great American Novel. I think it was even more ambitiously conceived--that Lockridge intended the book to be an allegory of humanity itself. A conversation with Ross recalled by a friend, Jeff Wylie, confirms this:

But he had transcended the merely historical, Ross explained. His scene of Raintree County was the mythical America, just as John Wesley Shawnessy [Wesley was later changed to Wickliff] was the mythical American; it was important to recognize that, since man lives in a world of myth. He does so since that is the only world in which he can live, and indeed the only world where life is. The book embraced a philosophy of ideas as daring as Plato's. In short, it was the American Republic.³²

It is clearer still from the book itself that the author intended his work to have a more than historical significance. The central theme is the meaning of human life, and it is difficult to see how even a cursory reading could lead to any other conclusion.

There are almost endless ways in which the book reveals the author's intention, but a few examples will illustrate the point. In the first

place, the choice of an epic mold, while not incompatible with a historical novel, tends to suggest a broader scope. This suggestion is strongly reinforced at the beginning of the book in the dawn dream in which a naked woman, reclining sphinx-like, asks the ancient riddle "---what creature is it that in the morning of its life---" (4). The hero's task--and the theme of the book--is disclosed at once; he must answer the question, what is man? A chapter or so later, Johnny, aged seven, decides that he will discover the secret of life and write a book capturing the secret in words. At the close of the book Mr. Shawnessy, aged fifty-three, is still writing his epic (as it is specifically called). The hero is still searching for the secret. It seems reasonable to conclude from these examples that Lockridge intended to write a massive fable of man's days on earth--much more reasonable than the critics' contention that he meant to compress all of this history and myth into the history of a single nation. The "American Republic" Lockridge spoke of writing is a timeless Republic of all humanity.

In N61 the Professor offers a cynical history of mankind, which ends with the species' self-destruction in the year 2032; Mr. Shawnessy counters with The Legend of Raintree County, which states the theme of eternal return and renewal in its final paragraph:

---And so he learned that Raintree County being but a dream must be upheld by dreamers. So he learned that human life's a myth but that only myths can be eternal. So he learned the gigantic labor by which the earth is rescued again and again from chaos and old night, by which the land is strewn with names, by which the river of human language is traced from summer to distant summer, by which beauty is plucked forever from the river and clothed in a veil of flesh, by which souls are brought from the Great Swamp into the sunlight of Raintree County and educated to its enduring

truths (1021).

The hero is seen as a reincarnation of gods and heroes from myth and history. He is Actaeon watching Diana when he glimpses Nell bathing in the river. He is Aeneas with the golden bough returning from death when he comes home to a town that has believed him dead for half a year. As Joseph Blotner points out:

One can identify him in various sections of the novel as Christ, Adam, Aeneas, Apollo, Alexander, Oedipus, Hercules, Actaeon, Siegfried, and Beowulf. He is also William Shakespeare, the Priest of Nemi described by Frazer, and--in the sense of Joyce's H. C. Earwicker--Everyman.³³

Allegory is the key device by which the life of John Wickliff Shawnessy is transformed into a history of mankind. We have already seen, in Chapter IV, how the Susanna and Esther series are allegorical reenactments of the Temptation and Fall. Indeed, every woman in the book can be seen as Eve to John's Adam, each one representing Eve in a different role and each story a different interpretation of the ancient myth. While the use of this or any other allegory does not dictate any particular structural design, the plot structure of Raintree County lends itself exceptionally well to Lockridge's conception. The alternation between flashback and frame day, the parallels suggested between past and present, the sense of coexistence of then and now, create a climate in which the reader is easily induced to find mythic meaning in the narrative.

The framework of the book is peculiarly adapted to allegory in another way. It seems almost specifically designed to accommodate the expanding quality of allegory. The basic plot is the Joycean synoptic day, which contains the flashbacks of the hero's entire life. But the

expansion goes farther than this. We begin with a single day which contains through memory a single life, but this life, through the hero's experience, is a symbolic acting out of America's coming of age; and through the mythicizing of American history, it symbolizes man's eternal struggle to find form and meaning in life. The structure of the book, then, which initially seems to enlarge one day so that it can contain a half century of a man's life, actually expands to take in the history of a nation and finally of mankind. The plot structure, with its reverse telescoping action, is itself a model of the allegorical progression from the particular to the universal. Form and content in the novel seem to grow naturally from each other, each reflecting and strengthening the other.

It is easy to see that the design of Raintree County is well-suited for an allegorical novel. Because symbolism so closely parallels allegory, one can say much the same things about symbol and plot structure as about allegory and plot structure. That is, the climate created in the book is conducive to symbolic as well as allegorical interpretation; and the expansion of thought needed to interpret a symbol goes well with the expanding nature of the structure. Still, a symbol is not an allegory, and further ties can be found between symbol and structure.

Raintree County abounds with symbols; perhaps, as many of the critics charged, it over-abounds. Certainly, especially at first reading, one feels somewhat besieged by meanings and significances. However, it is not as complicated as it first appears. Various major symbols that recur throughout the book function as central nuclei around which lesser symbols

may be clustered, bringing some order to the ranks. To illustrate the relationship between structure and symbol, I have chosen two of these central symbols: the riddle of the sphinx, and the river.

The entire riddle of the sphinx is "What creature is it that in the morning of its life goes on four legs, in the afternoon on two, and in the evening on three?". The answer, of course, is man; the riddle uses the metaphor of morning, afternoon, and evening for the life stages--infancy and childhood, manhood, and old age--of man. There is a very direct tie between this symbol (which is one of the keys to the theme) and the structure, built as it is upon the morning, afternoon, and evening of a literal day, and expanding so that each part of the day contains the flashbacks of corresponding periods in the hero's life. Ingeniously, the form of the book reflects the ancient riddle. Seen in this light, the significance of the long frame day chapter, N35 (discussed in Chapter IV), is heightened; this section signals Johnny's transition from boyhood to manhood, and the time is noon (which is heavily emphasized). Thus, the structure, with its frame day chapters showing the times of day and the flashbacks showing the ages of man, is both image of and answer to the riddle. Once perceived, this relationship seems charmingly simple and obvious. Whether it was deliberate or serendipitous, and how much it really contributes to the book, I don't know--but it's fun.

The second symbol, the river, is connected with the structure in more impressionistic and indirect ways, but I feel that the relationship definitely strengthens both symbol and structure. The comparison of

time with a river is a commonplace--but a powerful one. One of the chief functions of the plot structure is the manipulation of time. The time flow of the plot, as it doubles back and forth, offers a striking metaphor for the frequently described (and actually drawn, on the County map in the front material of the book) sinuous course of the Shawmucky River through the County. In this sense the design of the book is like the river itself. Like all good symbols, the river offers a number of possible interpretations. Certainly, it represents a source of life, of beauty, and of inspiration. The river also stands for the elemental earth, curving and mysterious, on which "the formal map of Raintree County had been laid down like a mask" (7), and it symbolizes the continuity of existence as "the oldest pathway of the County . . . the only Indian name left in the County" (93). This sense of the river as something very ancient and continuing is akin to the sense one gets from the past-present narrative form, that the past continues to exist in the present. There is some play with names that makes this connection more explicitly: In the summer of 1856 Johnny has decided that Shawmucky probably is a version of the Indian word Shakamak. As he dreams beside the river, he visualizes another young writer--Shakespeare--dreaming beside another; and the likeness of the names, Shakamak and Shakespeare, Shawmucky and Shawnessy strike him as an echo in time. "Sometimes it seemed that in some occult way Johnny Shawnessy was Willie Shakespeare, and that the Plays were still waiting to be written . . ." (98-99). The river flows through Raintree County in a series of complicated curves and bends, sometimes long and leisurely, sometimes quickly doubling back

on itself, just as the dual timestream of past and present flows through the book itself; the relationship between river and plot structure is an intimate one.

In discussing the various ways that Lockridge's design for Raintree County serves the book--investigating answers to the question "What is it for?"--this paper has considered what seem to me all of the major functions of the plot structure. Since it is impossible to pack 1060 pages of fine print into 60-odd pages of typescript, supporting examples and detailed analyses have had to be rigorously limited and perhaps some gaps left unfilled. However, I think there is ample evidence that the complicated structure does indeed enhance the book in a number of significant and important ways--more than enough to justify any additional burden the complexity may place on the reader.

As a kind of postscript: I have tried to avoid indulging in critical judgments on the book as a whole, since that is not what this paper is about, although by now the reader undoubtedly is aware that I have a high opinion of it. I have been fascinated with the book Ross and Tom Raintree County, because it seems to confirm some of my own vague theories about the book. All of Lockridge's editors were scared of the sheer size of the thing, and all three groups--at Houghton Mifflin, MGM, and Book-of-the-Month Club--insisted on and got massive cuts. Raintree County has always seemed to me incomplete in some troubling and indefinable way, a feeling that has increased with each rereading. Now, after studying Ross and Tom, I will always wonder whether the imposed cuts really

improved the book or mutilated it. (I am reminded of Margaret Webster's comment that the uncut Hamlet actually plays better for both actors and audience than any shortened version.) I wish I knew.

VI. APPENDIX: SEQUENCE OF FRAME DAY AND
FLASHBACK CHAPTERS

N: Frame day chapters T: Flashbacks

FOCUS: In this column (which applies only to the flashbacks) the first number indicates the period or character that is foremost in John Shawnessy's life during the flashback. Where other numbers follow, they indicate that the designated character or period is also of importance in the chapter, although not predominant.

The numbers represent:

1. early years, family
2. Nell, his first love
3. Susanna, his first wife
4. the war years
5. Laura, the city, the Gilded Age
6. Esther, his present wife
7. Eva Alice, his daughter
- P. the Professor, Jerusalem Webster Stiles

DATES: The time span of each chapter

PAGINATION: Pages in book

NO. OF PAGES: Number of pages covered by each chapter

S-M-L: Short, medium, long--length category of each chapter

Short: 14 Ts, 4-9 pages; 38 Ns, 1-4 pages
 Medium: 25 Ts, 10-19 " ; 19 Ns, 5-9 "
 Long: $\frac{13}{52}$ Ts, 20-34 " ; $\frac{4}{61}$ Ns, 10-17 "
 61 (N35 is excluded from these categories)

*Indicates a shift in the central point of view from John Shawnessy to Eva Alice or Esther, or omniscient author (N35).

**This long frame day chapter does not fit the pattern of any of the others, and is treated separately.

N	T	FOCUS	DATES	PAGINATION	NO. OF PAGES	S-M-L
N1				1-2	2	S
N2				3-8	6	M
	T1	1	Election '44	9-15	7	S
N3				16-21	6	M
	T2	1	7/20/48	22-34	13	M
N4				35-42	8	M
	T3	1	1848-1852	43-62	20	L
N5				63-64	2	S
	T4	1 2	July 4, '54	65-89	25	L
N6				90-92	3	S
	T5	2 1	Summer, '56	93-115	23	L
N7				116-123	8	M
	T6	2	9/6/56	124-141	18	M
N8				142-144	3	S
	T7	2 P	1857-1859	145-164	20	L
N9				165-167	3	S
	T8	3 1,2	5/26/59	168-182	15	M
N10				183-185	3	S
	T9	2	6/1/59	186-196	11	M
N11				197-199	3	S
	T10	2	6/18/59	200-210	11	M
N12				211	1	S
	T11	P 2,1	6/18/59	212-231	20	L
N13				232-234	3	S
N14*				235-237	3	S
	T12*	7	1880-1890	238-250	13	M
N15*				251-252	2	S
N16				253-257	5	M
	T13	3 2	Summer '59	258-270	13	M
N17				271-282	12	L
	T14	3 4	10/19/59	283-291	9	S
N18				292-296	5	M
	T15	3	Nov '59	297-305	9	S
N19				306-307	2	S
	T16	3 1	11/22/59	308-313	6	S
N20				314-317	4	S
	T17	3 2	Dec 1-2 '59	318-331	14	M
N21				332-333	2	S
	T18	3 4	12/2/59	334-354	21	L

N	T	FOCUS	DATES	PAGINATION	NO. OF PAGES	S-M-L
N22				355-357	3	S
N23*				358-365	8	M
	T19*	6	1857-1863	366-370	5	S
N24*				371-372	2	S
	T20*	6	5/1/76	373-377	5	S
N25*				378-379	2	S
	T21*	6	6/1/76	380-386	7	S
N26*				387-388	2	S
	T22*	6	July '76	389-392	4	S
N27*				393	1	S
	T23*	6	August '77	394-417	24	L
N28*				418-420	3	S
N29				421-429	9	M
	T24	3	1859-1860	430-454	25	L
N30				455-457	3	S
	T25	3	1860-1861	458-474	17	M
N31				475-479	5	M
	T26	3 4	Apr 12-14 '61	480-492	13	M
N32				493-495	3	S
	T27	3 4	1861-1863	496-511	16	M
N33				512-514	3	S
	T28	3 4	July 2-4 '63	515-548	34	L
N34				549-552	4	S
N35**				553-594	42	**
N36				595-601	7	M
	T29	4 2	7/13/63	602-618	17	M
N37				619-620	2	S
	T30	4 2	Summer '63	621-634	14	M
N38				635-636	2	S
	T31	4	Sept 19-21 '63	637-653	17	M
N39				654-656	3	S
	T32	4	11/22/63	657-668	12	M
N40				669	1	S
	T33	4	11/25/63	670-677	8	S
N41				678-679	2	S
	T34	4	Nov 14-16 '64	680-693	14	M
N42				694-695	2	S
	T35	4	11/26/64	696-718	23	L
N43				719-720	2	S
	T36	4	2/17/65	721-735	15	M
N44				736-737	2	S
	T37	4 2	5/24/65	738-750	13	M
N45				751-752	2	S
N46*				753-754	2	S
	T38*	7	1890-1892	755-764	10	M
N47				765-769	5	M
	T39	Interim	1865-1876	770-788	19	M
N48				789-793	5	M
	T40	5	July 4 '76	794-814	21	L
N49				815-816	2	S
	T41	5	1876-1877	817-823	7	S
N50				824-830	7	M
	T42	5	July 21-22 '77	831-843	13	M
N51				844-850	7	M
	T43	5	7/25/77	851-864	14	M
N52				865-868	4	S
N53*				869-870	2	S
	T44*	6	1877-1878	871-884	14	M
N54				885-890	6	M
	T45	1 3	July 4 '59	891-911	21	L
N55				912-916	5	M
	T46	3	July 4 '59	917-926	10	M
N56				927-933	7	M
	T47	3	July 4 '63	934-940	7	S
N57				941-948	8	M
	T48	4	4/15/65	949-978	30	L
N58				979-988	10	L
	T49	1 5,6	July-Aug '77	989-995	7	S
N59*				996-997	2	S
	T50*	6	July 4 '78	998-1004	7	S
N60*				1005-1009	5	M
	T51*	7	Pre-Historic	1010-1015	6	S
N61				1016-1032	17	L
	T52	2 4,1	5/31/65	1033-1049	17	M
N62				1050-1060	11	L

VII. NOTES

¹ Ross Lockridge, Jr., Raintree County (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1948). All quotations from the book are from this edition and are identified in the paper by page numbers.

² John Leggett, Ross and Tom: Two American Tragedies (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1974).

³ Joseph L. Blotner, "WHR Revaluations: 2 Raintree County Revisited," The Western Humanities Review, 10 (Winter, 1956), 57-64.

⁴ "Best-sellers of 1948," Time, 20 December 1948, p. 101.

⁵ Charles Lee, New York Times Book Review, 4 January 1948, p. 21.

⁶ Orville Prescott, The Yale Review, 37 (March, 1948), 574.

⁷ "American Myth," Time, 12 January 1948, p. 85.

⁸ Harrison Smith, "Sizing up the Comers," The Saturday Review, 12 February 1949, pp. 9-11.

⁹ Howard Mumford Jones, "Indiana Reflection of U.S. 1844-92," The Saturday Review, 3 January 1948, pp. 9-10.

¹⁰ James Hilton, New York Herald Tribune Book Review, 4 January 1948, p. 2.

¹¹ Elizabeth Johnson, The Commonweal, 47 (13 February 1948), 450.

¹² Nanette Kutner, "Ross Lockridge, Jr.--Escape from Main Street," The Saturday Review, 12 June 1948, pp. 6-7, 31.

¹³ "Indiana Epic," Newsweek, 19 January 1948, p. 93.

¹⁴ Hamilton Basso, "Two Novels: 'Raintree County' and 'The Aunt's Story,'" The New Yorker, 10 January 1948, pp. 79-80.

- ¹⁵William York Tindall, "Many-Leveled Fiction: Virginia Woolf to Ross Lockridge," College English, 10 (November, 1948), 65-71.
- ¹⁶Tindall, p. 71.
- ¹⁷Blotner, p. 58.
- ¹⁸Ibid., p. 60.
- ¹⁹Ibid., pp. 62-64.
- ²⁰Tindall, p. 71.
- ²¹Konrad Lorenz, On Aggression (New York: Harcourt Brace & World, Inc., 1966).
- ²²Leggett, p. 60-61.
- ²³Ibid., p. 66-67.
- ²⁴Ibid., p. 68.
- ²⁵Ibid., p. 69.
- ²⁶Ibid., p. 80.
- ²⁷Edward Stasheff and Rudy Bretz, The Television Program: Its Direction and Production (New York, Hill and Wang, 1962), p. 78.
- ²⁸Jones, p. 10.
- ²⁹Louis D. Gianetti, Understanding Movies (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., Prentice-Hall Inc., 1972), p. 204.
- ³⁰Leggett, p. 84.
- ³¹Ibid., p. 113.
- ³²Ibid., p. 113.
- ³³Blotner, p. 60.

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